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SENSITIVE  
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SUBJECT: MISSION USES INTEREST IN U.S. ELECTIONS TO PROMOTE ITS POLICIES

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION OUTSIDE USG

**¶1.** (SBU) Summary. The U.S. Mission took advantage of the extremely high interest among Nigerians in the 2008 U.S. Presidential Elections to promote its policies as outlined in the joint U.S.-Nigeria Framework for Partnership. In several speaking engagements the Ambassador highlighted the Mission's policy thrust centered on four democratic pillars of governing justly and democratically, investing in people, promoting economic growth and trade, and ensuring peace and security. She emphasized the importance of anti-corruption efforts, transparent elections and a truly independent electoral commission, press freedom, an active civil society, quality health care and education, and peace and security in the country and region with an emphasis on the Niger Delta. The Mission also partnered with the American private sector, civil society and the media to carry out all-night election watch events in Lagos and Abuja with an estimated 1,500 people in attendance. These events received significant live press coverage in several of Nigeria's leading broadcast media, and extensive print media articles in all regions of the country. The Ambassador also participated in live television talk shows, and engaged policy-focused civil society groups to promote U.S. policy and encourage the people and government of Nigeria to move toward the transparent, corruption-free democracy they envision for their country. She also added significant emphasis on press freedom given the GON's recent missteps in cracking down on press/blog entities.  
End summary.

Policy Message: What Democracies Do for their People

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**¶2.** (SBU) In a series of policy speeches, the Ambassador focused on what democracies must do for their people. On September 23, at a Fulbright Alumni Association conference at the University of Lagos, she emphasized that good democracies provide their people with access to quality education and health care. She highlighted several examples of Nigerian and American scholars who have used USG-funded exchange programs to strengthen democracy in Nigeria. She also underscored the importance of fair and transparent elections, and called for an electoral commission that is "truly independent," which generated a stir and debate throughout Nigeria, as evidenced in various media, about the lack of capacity and political influence of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

**¶3.** (SBU) On October 17, speaking to nearly 1,000 students, community leaders and professors at the American University of Nigeria in Yola, Adamawa State, which is affiliated with the American University in Washington, DC, the Ambassador emphasized the importance of strong institutions and smooth transitions as cornerstones of a democracy. She highlighted several USG programs aimed at helping Nigeria achieve its democracy goals as outlined in the shared USG-GON Framework for Partnership and its four democratic

pillars of governing justly and democratically, investing in people, economic growth and trade, and peace and security. While Nigeria was awaiting the Supreme Court decision on its own elections, the Ambassador underscored the importance of anti-corruption efforts and good governance. She challenged the audience, many of which will be future leaders of the country, to take an active role in shaping the government by participating in elections and holding the GON accountable for its actions. Others in the Mission, such as the DCM, Consul General, Pol Counselor, and Vice Consul also participated in a series of elections events passing these same messages on democracy, freedom of speech, and fair elections to civil society and student audiences in states throughout the North and South.

#### Election Activities

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**¶15.** (U) On November 4, the Ambassador delivered policy speeches at all-night election watch celebrations in Abuja and Lagos, stressing the importance of transparent elections, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly. Between the two locations an estimated 1,500 government, business and community leaders, civil society groups, students, Amcits, and other interested community members participated in the variety of election-related activities offered. Participants monitored the U.S. Election throughout the night via live broadcasts of CNN, Al Jazeera and BBC. An Intellectual Property room educated attendees about the U.S. election process and the candidates. Participants watched and discussed the U.S. presidential debates, and media partners used a "man on the street" format to interview people on their views of the U.S. Elections, which were broadcast live. Civil society partners conducted and

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monitored mock elections for non-U.S. citizens and many participants chose to have their photos taken with life-size cutouts of both candidates. More than 100 people in each location stayed through the night until results were announced around 5:00 a.m. local time.

**¶16.** (U) In addition to the all-night election watch events, the Mission used several other opportunities to promote its policy thrust in Nigeria. On October 23, the Ambassador engaged civil society leaders in a round-table discussion on the role of women in politics. On November 5 she hosted a select group of government, business, and community leaders at her residence for a post-election celebration where she spoke about U.S. policies and tasked the audience with creating a democracy that works for the people of Nigeria. She also appeared on live television talk shows in Abuja and Lagos emphasizing the Mission's policy framework for Nigeria. Other Mission staff presented on democracy and elections at Kaduna State University, Ahmadu Bello University, and at the American Corner in Bauchi State.

#### Public-Private Partnerships

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**¶14.** (SBU) As part of its public-private partnership initiative, the Mission partnered with several U.S. companies for financial and in-kind support of its all-night election watch activities. The Mission also engaged with strategic, policy-focused non-governmental partners in each location to assist with the elections process and build internal capacity by walking side-by-side with the Mission through a fair and transparent election process, including monitoring a mock election. The Mission selected key broadcast and print media partners for each event. In Lagos, this included Guardian Newspaper, Ray Power Radio, and Channels TV, which was recently shut down by the GON for its controversial reporting on the Yar'Adua Administration and the president's failing health. In Abuja, media partners included the Nigerian Television Authority, Freedom Radio, a popular station in Northern Nigeria, and Leadership Newspaper, which had been critical of USG policies in the past.

#### Press Coverage of Policy Thrust

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¶7. (SBU) Given the interest in the U.S. Elections in Nigeria, Mission activities received substantial press coverage over the past two months. The Ambassador's op-ed on democracy and U.S. policy in Nigeria was printed on Election Day in the leading Nigerian newspapers. Speeches and remarks were printed almost verbatim in several print media, and radio and television stations played footage of many of the election-related activities. The Mission's partnership with the recently shut-down Channels TV in Lagos and the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) in Abuja provided substantial airtime of the all-night election events on both stations. The high level of print and broadcast media coverage of the many Mission election activities allowed our policy messages to repetitiously reach a broad audience throughout the country.

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